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ABSTRACT

Facts on career academies are provided for local school board members, superintendents, other district administrators, and building administrators. The facts are divided into three categories. The category title or the fact is followed by the numbers of the references on which that category or fact is based. The section called Components of Career Academies lists block scheduling, common teacher planning time, occupational focus, integrated academic and vocational curriculum, and partnerships with business. The section called Outcomes When Students Attend Career Academies includes these facts: higher student satisfaction, attendance, grade point averages, course credits earned; lower absenteeism and dropout rates; and improved postsecondary-related outcomes. The section called Guidelines for Implementations lists these facts: the career academy must be organized as a separate, distinct, and autonomous unit; it must have its own vision, culture, and environment; it must build students' academic and skills through a complete curriculum; and all stakeholders must be committed to the career academy and students' success. These implications are made: career academies should be implemented to improve high school incomes of noncollege-prep students, and policymakers and building administrators should provide leadership, resources, and support required for full participation. (Contains 18 references.) (YLB)

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FAST FACTS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

IN BRIEF

NATIONAL DISSEMINATION CENTER
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Career Academies as Smaller Learning Communities

no. 20

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by Michael E. Wonacott

Components of Career Academies

(references 9, 12, 15, 18)

- A smaller learning community—a school-within-a-school
- Block scheduling of classes and students
- Common teacher planning time
- Occupational focus
- Integrated academic and vocational curriculum
- Reduced student-teacher ratio
- Partnerships with business

Primary Audience

Local school board members
Superintendents
Other district administrators
Building administrators

Outcomes When Students Attend Career Academies

- Higher student satisfaction, attendance, grade point averages, and course credits earned (8, 9, 10, 13, 14)
- Lower absenteeism and dropout rates (8, 13, 14, 18)
- Improved postsecondary-related outcomes—preparation, enrollment (particularly in 4-year colleges), and success (15, 17, 18)
- *Usually* significantly better, particularly for at-risk students, than for general education or vocational students (11, 18)

Guidelines for Implementation

(2, 3, 9, 16, 18)

- The career academy can produce the positive effects of a smaller school (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7) ***if it is carefully implemented as a school-within-a-school.***
- The career academy must be organized as a separate, distinct, and autonomous unit.
- The career academy must have its own vision, culture, and environment.
- The career academy must build students' academic and skills through a complete curriculum.
- All stakeholders must have a genuine commitment to the career academy and to students' success.

Implications

- To increase options for parents and students, local policymakers—school board members, superintendents, and other district administrators—should consider implementing career academies as a means of improving the high school outcomes of their noncollege-prep students, especially in districts serving large proportions of at-risk students.
- Both policymakers and building administrators should provide the leadership, resources, and support required for full participation by all stakeholders and for the full implementation of the career academy concept in practice.

For more information and details see the following references, on which this ***In Brief*** is based.

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